

# TOWN-PLANNING AND HOUSING.

*Supplement to  
The Architectural Review*

## THE RUISLIP MANOR COMPETITION A STUDY IN COMPARATIVE TOWN PLANNING

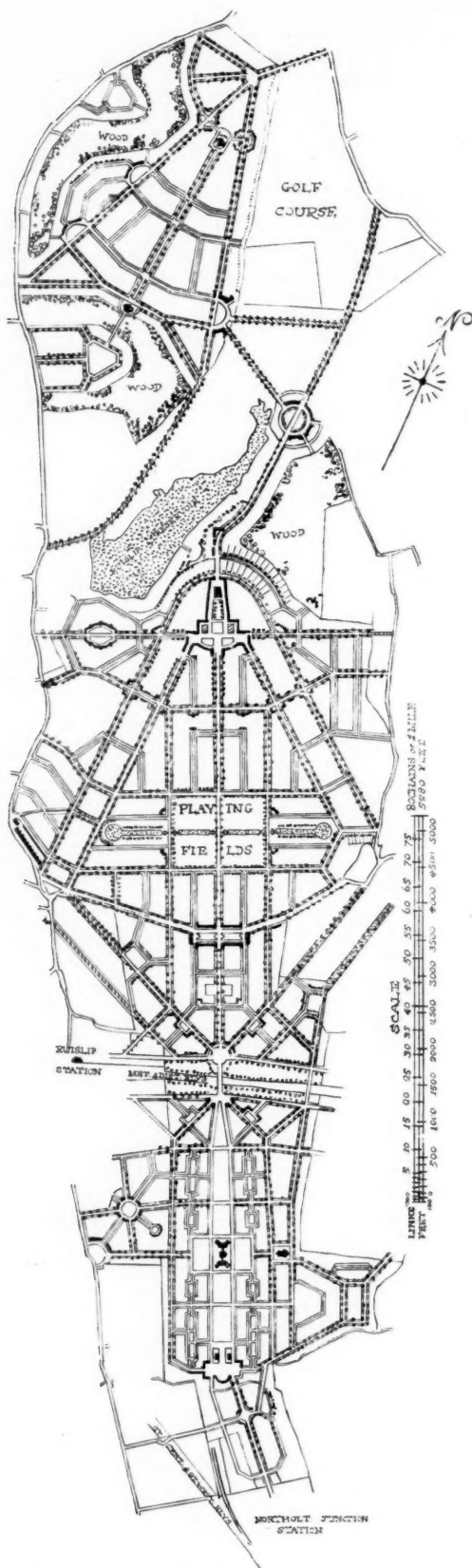


THE recent competition arranged by the promoters of the company which is proposing to develop the large estate of Ruislip Manor, near Northwood, Middlesex, has been of many-sided interest. The urban district council which has control of the area, having decided to apply for permission to prepare a town-planning scheme, invited the co-operation of the owners in the district. The owners of Ruislip Manor at once agreed to join in the scheme, and asked the authority to indicate the lines of main roads required in connection with the future development of the whole of the area. The local authority consented to give this indication, and agreed to co-operate with the company as to how the development should proceed, and also with regard to the incorporation of the scheme in a larger one, under the Town Planning Act, for the remainder of the undeveloped area in the district. As a result, the Ruislip Manor Company proceeded to obtain designs on the basis of a map of the area which indicated the points of connection required by the authority. No doubt the authority does not bind itself to accept this design in detail, but the general result is obtained that the company gets its own scheme adopted by the authority, with certain reservations in the public interest, and secures that the land of the surrounding owners shall be laid out in accordance with a comprehensive and homogeneous scheme. The authority gets the greater part of its area designed without

any cost to itself, and by working in a spirit of mutual concession with the company probably saves the district much expense in the future, while increasing its attractiveness to residents.

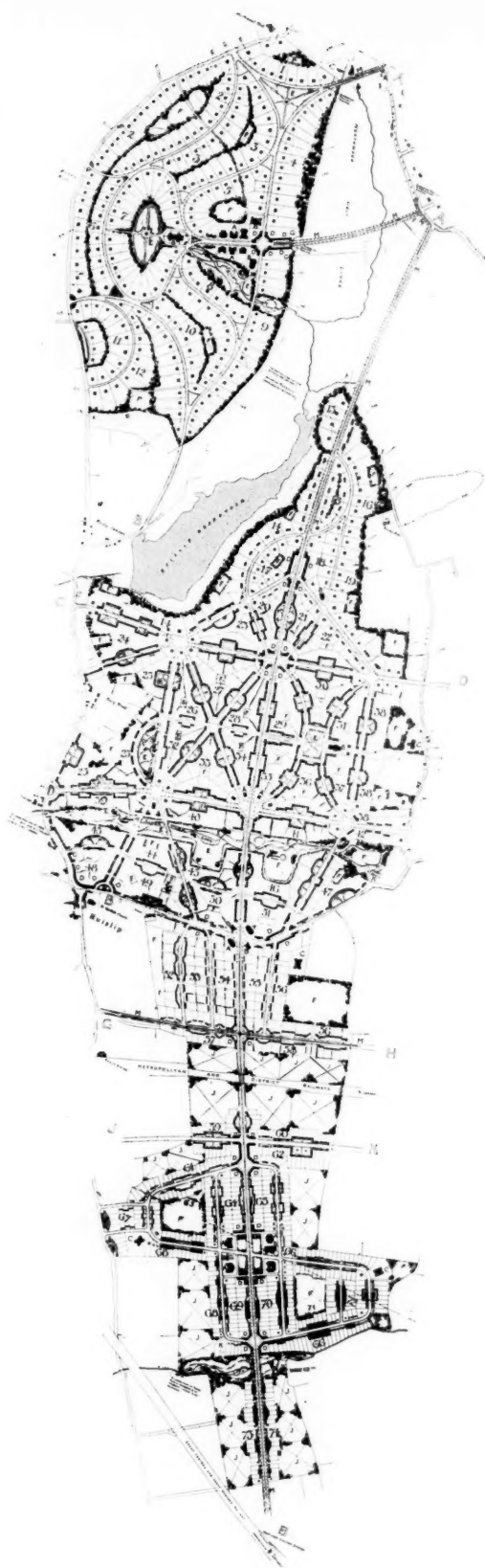
About sixty designs appear to have been submitted, having cost, in the aggregate, probably £3,000 to produce. The plans, as exhibited at the Alpine Gallery, showed a great deal of merit, and indicated that many architects are giving close study to town planning. It was noticeable that only two or three engineers and surveyors submitted designs, and these it must be said could not be classed as worthy of a place among a select first dozen of the plans by architects. It is regrettable that, in a competition of this kind, so much effort should necessarily be wasted, and in spite of the value to the promoters of the publicity attaching to a competition, one would have thought that better results would have been obtained by paying a thoroughly qualified group of designers (including an architect, engineer, and surveyor) to prepare a plan. Something must of course be said in favour of competitions while the number of experts is so limited, but it is hardly to be expected that the best talent will be attracted by this method in the case of town designing. Probably a more satisfactory arrangement would have been for the authority to have promoted the competition for the design of the whole area, the Ruislip Manor Company contributing the bulk of the cost. The designers of the estate were no doubt handicapped by not being able to show the application of their design outside the boundary of the one estate, and a study of the designs submitted gives the impression that many

# THE RUISLIP MANOR COMPETITION



FIRST-PREMIATED DESIGN  
A. AND J. SOUTAR, ARCHITECTS

The Architectural Review



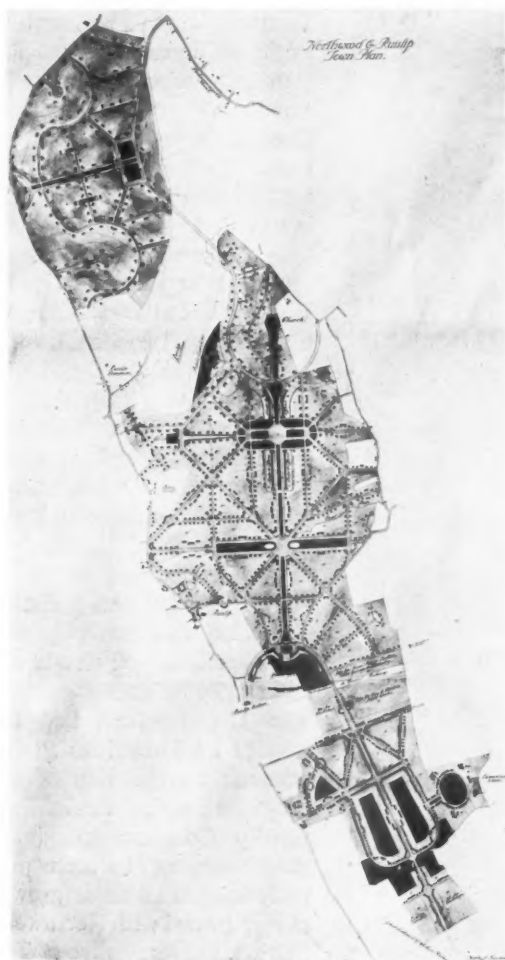
SECOND-PREMIATED DESIGN  
GEORGE HORNBLOWER, F.R.I.B.A., ARCHITECT

of the competitors failed to appreciate the fact that the estate was only a part of a whole. The design had to provide for housing accommodation for about 35,000 people. It is unreasonable to expect that the whole of this population will be attracted to the one estate without a nearly corresponding ratio of increase in the surrounding district. Making allowances for the land of owners who do not want to develop their land on the one hand, and for the possible greater attractiveness of the company's land over that of the surrounding owners on the other, we might still assume that when Ruislip Manor has a population of 35,000 the whole of Ruislip and Northwood will not have less than 70,000 in its borders. In twenty years' time this comparatively large town will be on the very fringe of London's suburbs. We have therefore to consider the design of a part of an area to accommodate 70,000 people, requiring railway and tramway facilities for local traffic and for traffic with London, shops, offices, schools, churches, theatres, halls, institutes, etc. Some

## THE RUISLIP MANOR COMPETITION



PORTION OF DESIGN  
BY BURGESS AND MYER



THIRD-PREMIATED DESIGN  
H. R. GARDNER, ARCHITECT

March 1911

XXIX—M

might say that this is looking too far ahead, but if it is, the whole idea of planning the estate is open to the same criticism; and it is not suggested to look forward a day in advance of the time when Ruislip Manor will be completely developed.

When considered from this point of view the scheme assumes a very important character. Letchworth Garden City only contemplates provision for 30,000 people. At Ruislip provision has to be made for more than twice that number. How are the five railway stations within the area to be adapted for this number, and will new or extended railway facilities be necessary to provide for the increased traffic? What is the usual number of shops and public buildings for a town of this size? How and where should they be provided? These are questions which competitors may have asked, but for the most part they avoided committing themselves to details. Where they have, the number of public buildings proposed is totally inadequate, and this notwithstanding that one of their aims should have been to give dignity to their plan on the one hand, and a suitable setting for public buildings on the other, by incorporating as many of these as practicable in the design. Hornsey, with about 100,000 inhabitants, has 291½ acres of public parks and open spaces. It has 20½ acres of allotments, four public libraries, and sixty miles of roads. Its rateable value is £677,637 and its debt £724,763. These are a few scattered facts about an urban district not much greater in size than is contemplated at Ruislip and Northwood, and the planning should be considered in relation to them and to the many others that are sure to arise. One would have thought that the reports accompanying the designs

## THE RUISLIP MANOR COMPETITION

would have given some guidance in the matter; but these were, generally speaking, inadequate, and unworthy of the occasion or of the designs.

Mr. C. R. Ashbee, in a very well-thought-out report accompanying his designs, said that he "assumed that the historic and natural features of the site must determine the design absolutely." That is surely too strong a plea for these features. They must certainly be carefully considered, but the most important duty of the designer is to put himself in the position of visualising the district under the transformation caused by its conver-

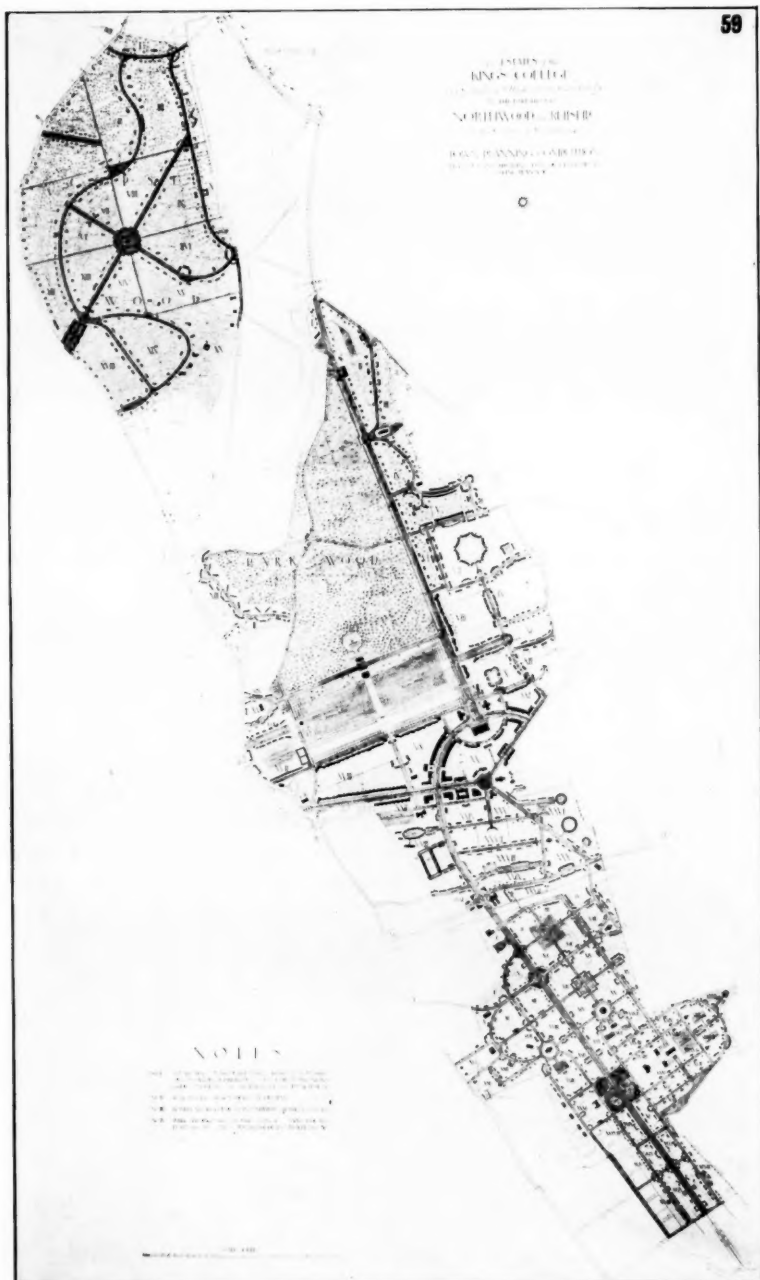
sion from a purely rural into a comparatively thickly populated area. Having done that he should set himself to consider how to preserve the beautiful and historic, and how to make the most of natural features. Mr. Ashbee rightly says that the "Garden City" postulates a higher civic organisation than the haphazard town of our time." The designer has therefore to provide for the best of what can be within practical limits, and not merely for the best that now is.

The designs submitted were not striking as regards original suggestions, nor in the provision for the "rapid advance of scientific invention."

A governing factor in the preparation of any plan is the proper placing of the civic centre and the connection this has with the railway station or stations. The two principal stations in the district are Ruislip and Northwood. Northolt Junction is too remote in the south to become a railway centre, although it might be an excellent supplementary means of getting to London if connected with Northwood and Ruislip by tram. Eastcote Halt is not so well situated as Ruislip, and is not likely to become more than a secondary station.

The Metropolitan Station at Northwood is likely to remain the "centre" point for the northern portion of the district, and for a long time to come the Northwood portion of the district will no doubt strive to maintain its identity apart from Ruislip and the main portion of the Ruislip Manor development.

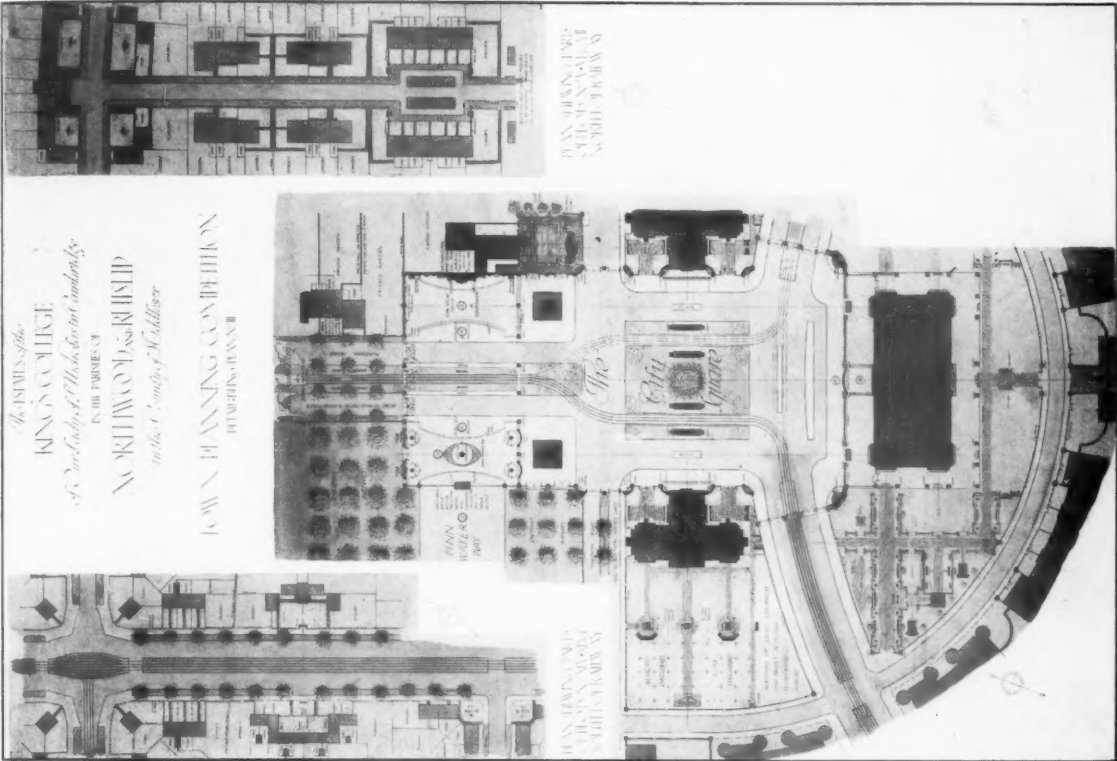
The Ruislip Manor Estate is divided into two very distinct portions, and should not necessarily be treated as one. The Copse Wood and the wooded land overlooking the reservoir to the line of the proposed main road from Ruislip Common to Pinner would appear to be more properly treated as an outgrowth of Northwood with Northwood Station as its centre. The remainder of the estate centres



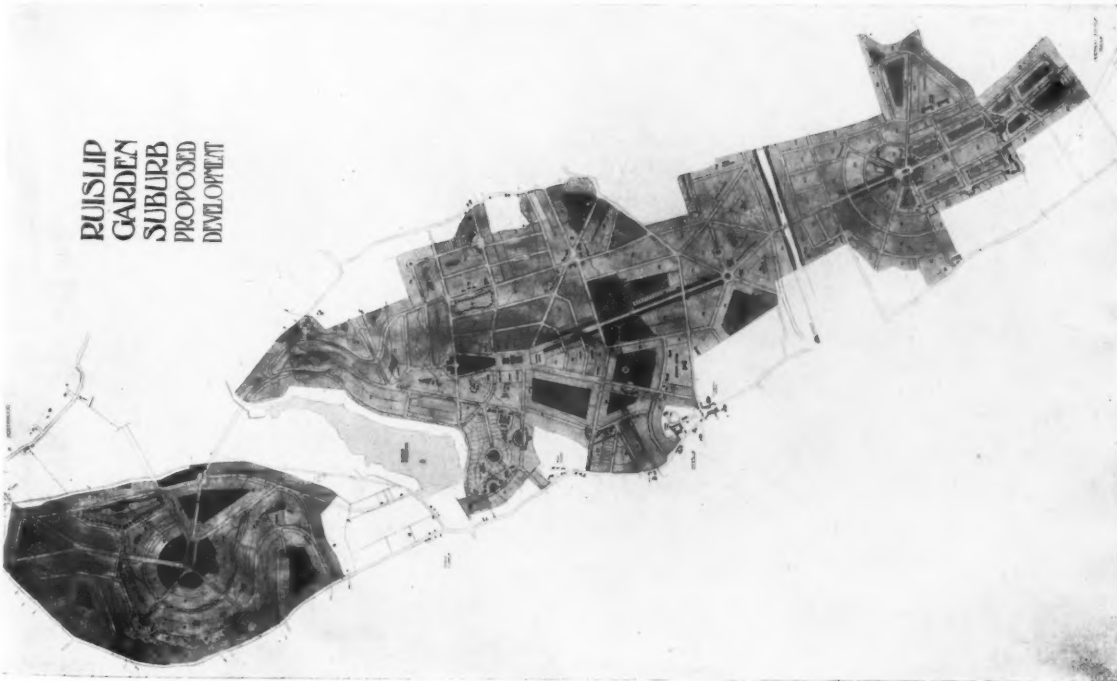
DESIGN BY LAURENCE K. HALL, F.R.I.B.A.



# THE RUISLIP MANOR COMPETITION

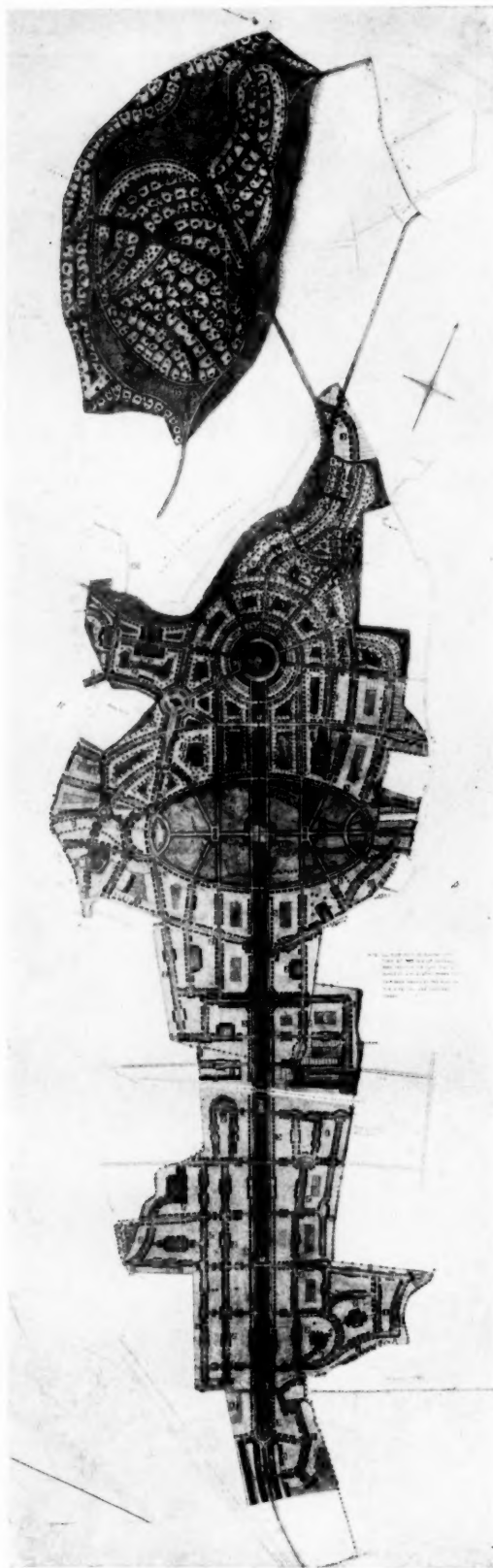


PORTION OF DESIGN BY LAURENCE K. HALL, F.R.I.B.A.

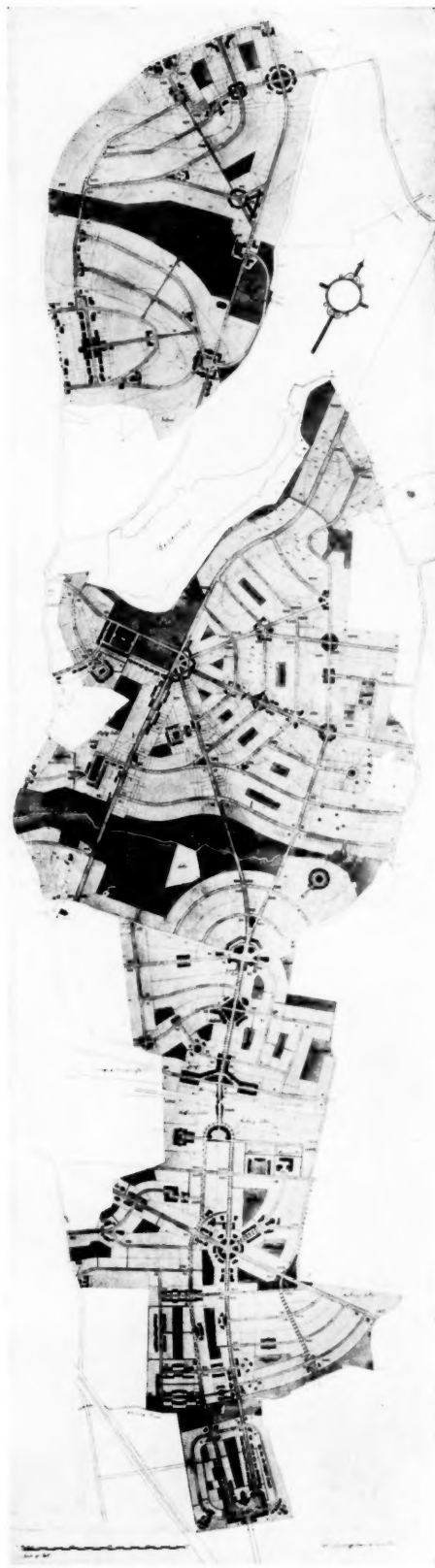


DESIGN BY BENNETT AND BIDWELL

# THE RUISLIP MANOR COMPETITION



DESIGN BY T. F. PENNINGTON, A.R.I.B.A.



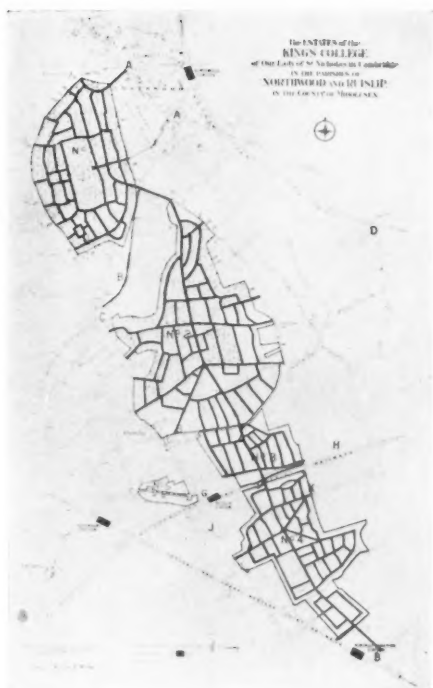
DESIGN BY CLAPHAM LANDER AND MANSFORD

## THE RUISLIP MANOR COMPETITION

the existing station to the centre of the town with proper dignity and seriousness.

Many of the competitors do not seem to have appreciated the desirability of concentration in providing centres for public buildings, shops, offices, etc. Messrs. Soutar have six small centres scattered along the main road in the middle of the estate, and the principal place adjoining the reservoir has the fault of being too near Northwood, which will always remain the centre point for the north. The ideal would surely be to leave this dignity to Northwood, to provide a footpath connection between Copse Wood and Northwood Station, and to make the civic centre of the Ruislip Manor scheme at Windmill Hill, with direct connections between this centre and the railway station, Ruislip Village, and Eastcote.

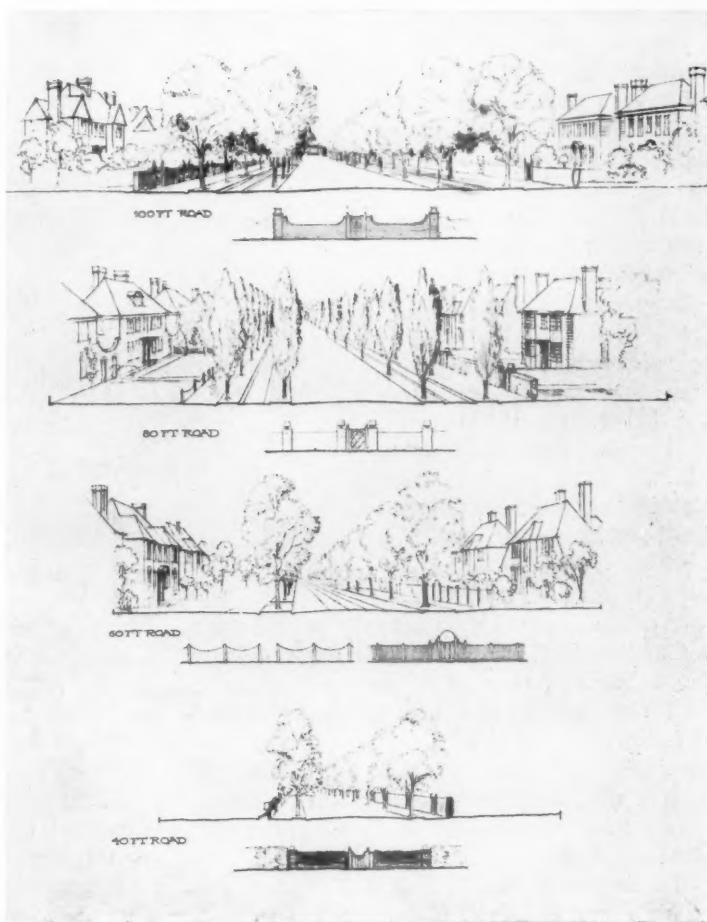
One cannot too severely criticise the proposal on the first-premiated plan to have the principal school building surrounded by main roads—in fact the roads run through what are apparently intended for the recreation grounds of the school. The treatment of Copse Wood in this plan is also open to criticism. More might have been done to preserve the timber, and greater attention given



DESIGN BY G. S. KEMPTON

round Windmill Hill, and should have its railway station half-way between the existing Ruislip Station and Eastcote Halt, where the proposed new bridge crosses the line. If the direct connections proposed on the first-premiated plan, between the road as it crosses the railway and Ruislip and Eastcote villages, had been practicable, a new station could have been made as accessible to these places as the two separate stations now existing. Thus the railway company might have been induced to provide one good station at this point instead of the other two, to serve the existing and prospective population.

Whether the failure of Messrs. Soutar to provide a proper connection with the only good station now serving the main part of the estate is due to their faith in a new station being provided, may or may not be the case, but if such a station were provided it would remove one of the most serious objections to their scheme. The third-premiated plan has at least the merit of treating the approach from



DESIGN BY GEOFFRY LUCAS, A.R.I.B.A. SECTIONS OF ROADS

## THE RUISLIP MANOR COMPETITION

to the contours. It will be interesting to see how the scheme works out in practice, but some of the plans of other competitors might well be considered as more appropriate for this detached area. Those of Mr. Laurence Hall, Mr. Hornblower, Messrs. Pepler and Allen, and Messrs. Bennett and Bidwell are apparently better adapted to the ground and permit of more economical development. The plans of Mr. Laurence Hall, Messrs. Pepler and Allen, and Messrs. Clapham Lander & Mansford are also notable as showing an effort to maintain the rural character of the estate in the proposed development. It is open to doubt whether, with such a large population as is contemplated, the scheme could be developed on the lines of the enlarged semi-rural village rather than on those of the usual urban district, but from the point of view of the intending resident the former would probably be most attractive. Whether Londoners will be induced to go to a rectangular town with plots of 100 ft. deep is a matter for experience, but we should think that more generous provision of gardens and open spaces would lead to better results.

Apart from these few criticisms, we recognise great merit in Messrs. Soutar's plan—the excellence of their road connections, the opportunity afforded for fine architectural treatment, and the simplicity of the lines. It has also the merit of being capable of modification without destroying the general scheme.

In the third-premiated plan the absence of detail in the triangular plots is a serious defect. The treatment of such triangles is one of the most difficult problems.

The feature of Mr. T. F. Pennington's plan is his main avenue, 250 ft. wide, with two carriage-ways 30 ft. wide. There is much to be said for the



DESIGN BY GEOFFRY LUCAS, A.R.I.B.A.

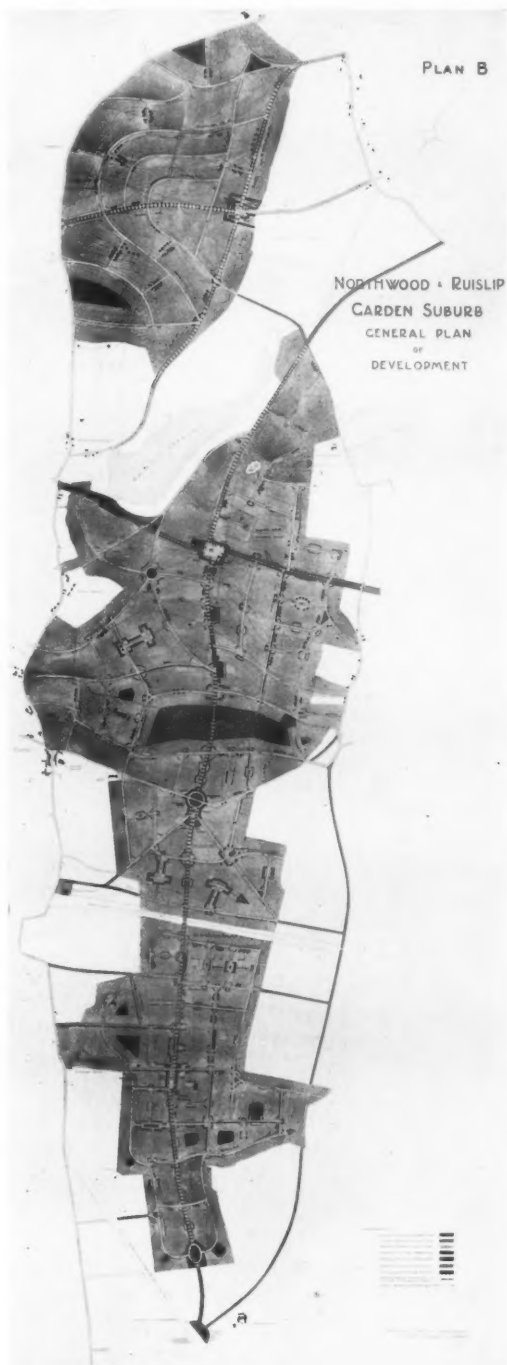
idea of providing a show avenue in the centre of the estate where its attractiveness can be felt by the resident and the passing visitor without conscious effort. A new station is definitely proposed in this plan. The appearance of the design is rather spoiled by the shape of the park, and the cost of development would be greatly increased by the extensive road frontage round and through the open spaces.

It is surprising that Mr. Geoffrey Lucas's plan did not secure a place of honour. It is a very excellent plan, worthy of careful study.



Mr. Gilbert Waterhouse's plan would probably have made a running for the prize if he had finished it. His civic centre is provided at the right place, with possible alternative connections with the existing and proposed Ruislip stations. As in previous plans by Mr. Waterhouse, his architectural treatment is above the average.

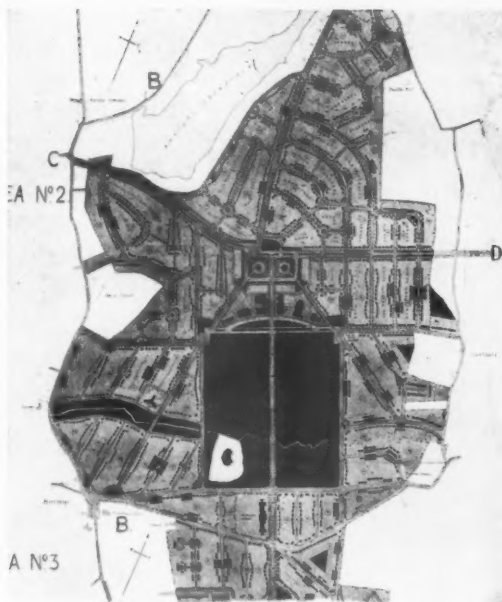
The combination of the public buildings with the main through route (C to D) and the public



DESIGN BY PEPLER AND ALLEN

March 1911

## THE RUISLIP MANOR COMPETITION



PORTION OF DESIGN BY E. C. P. MONSON, F.R.I.B.A.

park in Mr. E. C. P. Monson's plan is a good feature, and might have been adopted by more competitors.

Mr. H. Welch and several other competitors have given too much attention to architectural details and too little to the broad principles of planning. It was notable that competitors who went in for too much detail rather gave their case away.

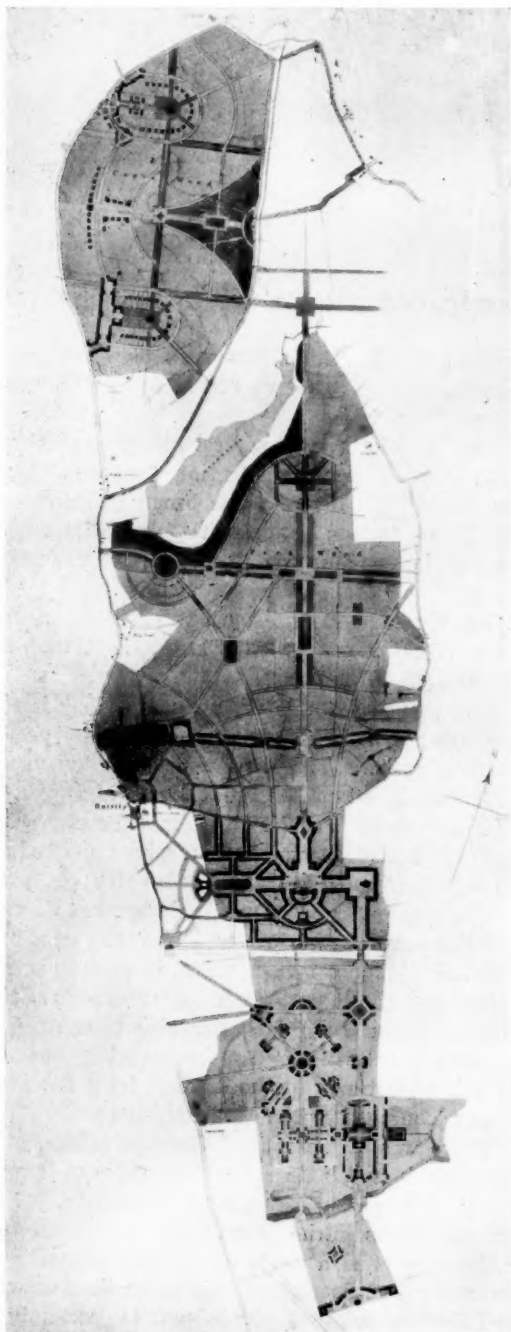
The flat land in the south is probably treated with most effect by Mr. Laurence Hall and Mr. Gilbert Waterhouse.

One of the features of the competition is the triumph of what a contemporary calls the "pretty pattern" plan. The first-premiated plan is more or less modelled on the French-American plan of Washington by L'Enfant, with mixed rectangular and radial roads. Competitors who appeared to be influenced by modern garden-city planning as practised so excellently at Hampstead do not seem to have been considered of much account. Does this indicate that there is already a reaction against the pretty narrow culs-de-sac of the Garden Suburb? It is hoped that the aim after aesthetic effect will not go so far as to drive us back to the stereotyped methods which have too long been encouraged by the Model By-laws.

There was an absence of German influence in the designs, and little attempt to strive at irregularity for purely architectural reasons. The irregular lines in the plan of Mr. G. S. Kempton rather suggested a study of German planning in its least scientific aspect. To make lines uneven and broken without any object is certainly a mistake.

## THE RUISLIP MANOR COMPETITION

On the whole the competition has been of great service to the town-planning movement. While the science of planning is so new we must look to the experience of such competitions to do for the young designer what teaching and examination may be able to accomplish later. It has also helped us to start the building-up of a school of town-planners, which we hope will be enlightened enough to imitate the best of German and American methods, and yet have sufficient enterprise, imagi-



DESIGN BY GILBERT WATERHOUSE

The Architectural Review

nation, and initiative to give a character of its own to British town-planning.

At the time of the exhibition of the designs for the Ruislip estate, a conference was held at the Alpine Club. Alderman W. Thompson, who presided, said with reference to the Town Planning Act that he was one of those who, when the Bill was in Parliament, did his best to bring about some alterations in it, because he saw that there would be considerable difficulty in working certain parts of the scheme. That view had been justified by the great difficulty which they had all experienced. But it was only fair to the Local Government Board to say that no one recognised more than the Government Department itself that the whole success of the Act depended upon its interpretation, and representatives of the Local Government Board had said that they were going to interpret it so as to make it work as well and as smoothly as possible.

The Local Government Board inquiry into the scheme was held by Mr. Thomas Adams on February 16th. Mr. E. R. Abbot, Clerk to the District Council, in supporting the scheme, said that the population of the district had grown from 1,455 in 1881 to an estimated population of 6,273 at the present time. The number of houses inhabited in June 1910 was 1,230, and he claimed that the district was one of the most healthy and beautiful within the same distance of London. The objects of the scheme were to preserve the amenities of the district, its sanitary condition and convenience in connection with the laying out of the land. The principal landowners had been communicated with, and most of them were generally in favour of the scheme. The area of the urban district was 6,585 acres, of which it was proposed to include 5,859 acres in the scheme, and also 63 acres in the area of the Watford Urban District, making a total of 5,922 acres. The King's College Trustees had proposed to lay out a portion of the area on town-planning lines, and the District Council had unanimously resolved that it would be wrong to delay further in preparing a scheme for such portions of the whole district as were likely to be used for building purposes according to the definition in the Act.

Mr. Carr, Surveyor to the Ruislip-Northwood Urban District Council, gave evidence in support of the application, and stated that in consequence of the Council not having previously possessed town-planning powers, roads had been laid out and property developed in a manner which militated against the amenities of the district.

Objections were heard from the Hertfordshire County Council, the Watford Urban District Council, the local golf club, and four local landowners against the inclusion of certain properties in the proposed scheme.